

DECISION MEMO

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST

MENA-ODEN RANGER DISTRICT

SHUT IN WILDLIFE STAND IMPROVEMENT

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Mena Oden Ranger District proposes manual wildlife stand improvement (WSI) using chainsaws on approximately 2,012 acres in Shut in Mountain Walk-In Turkey Area in Scott and Polk County, Arkansas. The following table lists the areas proposed for treatment.

Area	Compartment	Stand	Treatment	Acres ¹
1	822	1	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	15.61
2	822	4	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	68.22
3	822	17	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	40.51
4	823	2	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	145.1
5	823	4	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	235.47
6	824	2	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	677.02
7	831	2	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	67.56
8	831	4	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	62.55
9	831	12	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	38.46
10	831	13	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	53.42
11	831	14	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	44.18
12	831	15	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	48.66
13	831	16	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	70.92
14	831	17	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	105.78
15	831	18	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	57.73
16	831	27	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	252.32
17	831	28	Manual WSI w/chainsaws	28.85
Total				2012.36

¹ Note: Acres were derived from GIS data, and product accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based upon modeling or interpretation, incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those, for which they were created, may yield inaccurate or misleading results. We released this information in April 2020. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification.

The purpose and primary goal of (WSI) is to thin out mid-canopy vegetation to increase growth of understory forbs, grasses, and shrubs, to enhance wildlife forage, and increase growth and vigor of overstory mast producers. Trees favored for retaining in the overstory would be hard-mast producing species such as oaks and hickories. WSI will be accomplished using chainsaws to cut and fell competing stems. Wildlife den trees and some existing large hardwood trees

would be retained to complement the hardwood component. Other hardwood stems from desired species would be selected and retained from the developing regeneration.

None of these treatments involve herbicide application, road construction, or any other ground disturbing activities. Streamside management zones and drainages will not be treated.

DECISION

I have decided to approve the above detailed activities. These actions fall into a category of actions (timber stand and or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction, Category 6; Section 31.2 in FSH 1909.15) which the Chief of the Forest Service has determined will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species –. Forest Service sensitive species: No impact: Kentucky lady slipper and Narrowleaf Ironweed, beneficial impact: Monarch butterfly, may impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or loss of viability: Leopard Darter (*Percina pantherina*), Leopard Darter critical habitat, Harperella (*Ptilimnium nodosum*), Arkansas Fatmucket (*Lampsilis powellii*), Scaleshell (*Leptodea leptodon*), Ouachita Rock-pocketbook (*Arkansia wheeleri*), Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*). (Biological Evaluation, project file). The project “may affect, likely to adversely affect” the Northern Long-eared bat; however, there are no effects beyond those previously disclosed in the programmatic biological opinion dated January 5, 2016. Project specific Fish and Wildlife Service concurrence was received April 15, 2020.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – there are no floodplains or jurisdictional wetlands within the project area and none will be impacted by project activities; there are no municipal watersheds in the project area
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- Research natural areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – There would be no

extraordinary circumstances related to these resources because they are not present in the project area. This is based on site specific cultural resource surveys conducted on the analysis area, preparation of a Cultural Resources Report, and consultation on the proposed project with the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Officer.

- Archaeological sites or historic properties or areas – The actions will avoid any sites listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and will not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic resources. This is based on site specific cultural resource surveys conducted on the analysis area.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Ouachita National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions in April 2020 and updated periodically during the analysis. A project announcement letter was mailed to interested parties on April 13, 2020. No comments were received.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Ouachita National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (OBJECTION) OPPORTUNITIES

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are not subject to an administrative review process (pre-decisional objection process) (Agriculture Act of 2014, Subtitle A, Sec. 8006).

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The project may be implemented immediately.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Mitzi Cole District Biologist, Mena-Oden Ranger District, 1603 Hwy 71 North, Mena AR, 71953, 479-394-2382; mgole@fs.fed.us.

/s/ Tim Oosterhous

04/28/20

TIM OOSTERHOUS
District Ranger

Date

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.